

Category E, Aug 6, 2002, Herald Union

Ecstasy use still rising

'Smart' testing catching more soldiers

By David Ruderman

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Ecstasy use was up 23 percent among soldiers stationed around the 104th Area Support Group based on testing for the past nine months, said Patrick Teel, alcohol and drug control officer for the 104th ASG. The increase parallels increases Army-wide and in society at large, he said.

"I think the 104th is running just slightly above the Army positive rate. One of the most important reasons for this increase is unit commander's use of smart testing within their units. Truth is I haven't seen the spike here we've seen in other places because we already had our testing in place," he said.

The Army-wide positive test rate in the second quarter of 2002 was 1.45 percent. The rate for active duty soldiers was 1.29 percent, said Teel. The attraction of ecstasy as a recreational drug of choice among soldiers and young adults in all walks of life is based on easy access, relatively low price and the speed with which detectable traces leave the body, he said.

Despite its current popularity ecstasy remains low on the list of substances detected in ongoing random testing of soldiers. There were 3,345 positives Army-wide for THC, the active ingredient in marijuana and hashish, through the second quarter of 2002, said Teel. By comparison there were 945 positives for cocaine and 663 for a variety of amphetamines. In the latter group 186 were for ecstasy. "Marijuana is still the drug of choice," said Teel.

In the same period a total of 227 soldiers across the 104th ASG tested positive for THC, 70 tested positive for cocaine and 122 tested positive for ecstasy. "ASG-wide we are at about a 1.5 percent positive rate, that is positive samples for samples tested. This a mild difference from the active Army-wide average of 1.29 percent," he said.

Units within the 104th ASG test approximately 3,500-3,800 soldiers monthly, said Teel. "The goal within USAREUR is to test 200 percent. That means every soldier should be tested twice a year." All samples are sent to the United States for analysis and all are tested for THC, amphetamines (including ecstasy), cocaine and one other drug which varies from test group to test group, he said.

Army policy advocates an active and aggressive urine-testing program as an effective deterrent against drug use, said Teel. Unit commanders should understand the urinalysis program and pursue smart testing. "The commander needs to believe in drug testing as a deterrence to drug use," he said.

The golden rule of smart testing is to be unpredictable, said Teel. Commanders should employ back-to-back testing (for instance, on a Friday and then again on a Monday), weekend or holiday sweeps, pre- and post-deployment testing and testing during field exercises. "Extended field time without the threat of testing is an open invitation to the use of illicit drugs," said Teel.

Commanders should insist on flawless collections conducted with respect and dignity for the soldier, said Teel, and should monitor soldiers who seem to avoid giving samples. Additionally, units should also adopt policies that require all soldiers returning from temporary duty, training and leave to provide a specimen within 72 hours of returning to duty. The same should apply to all new soldiers reporting for duty. Soldiers arrested for any offense should also be tested, he said.

Soldiers must know that on any given day of the year, he or she may be tested. To make deterrence effective every unit has a trained Unit Prevention Leader who briefs soldiers on the dangers of drug use and helps conduct the testing program.

"A lot of people just think they're not going to get caught," said Sgt. Douglas R. Morris, training NCO for Company C, 501st Forward Support Battalion

in Friedberg, the unit's UPL. He briefs his unit at least quarterly on the adverse physical and psychological effects of drug use and helps execute random testing. "We usually do the whole unit, 100 percent. The only people who know in advance when that's going to be are me and the commander," he said.

Category F, June 25, 2002, Herald Union

Preventing family violence

Family Advocacy Program, Social Work Services charged with education, intervention and treatment

By David Ruderman

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

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Category H, April 30, 2002, Herald Union

Cavalry sluggers vie for bragging rights

Boxers punch their way to wins at Büdingen bouts

By David Ruderman

104th Area Support Group Public Affairs Office

Flashes of first-rate fisticuffs were rare at 1-1st Cavalry's Boxamania VII tournament April 19, but the crowd didn't seem to mind. Over 400 people jammed the Büdingen Fitness Center to cheer their favorites and jeer their foes in 13 bouts of boxing that made up in enthusiasm for what they lacked in finesse.

"There were a couple of mismatches, but some of the bouts have been very good," said Gary Lewandowski, director of the 414th Base Support Battalion Community Recreation Division.

Josue Villasenor defeated Jason Johnson in a middleweight face-off that went the full three rounds, one of the more skillful bouts of the evening. Villasenor had never boxed before. "Only for my life, never for sport," said the Chicago native. "It was fun. I'm a southpaw so I don't think he was expecting that. They're short rounds, but they sure get you tired.

"I was just a little out of shape," said Johnson. "Last year I won this thing, but not this time around. I've been out in the field too much to train." So why would he tape up and get in the ring without enough training? "It just relieves tension and it's fun. I don't hold any grudges when I go out there. It's just a good way to get out your frustration and anger," he said.

Craig Becker, who went down to defeat at the hands of Ryan Carlson in a heavyweight match, expressed a similar motivation. "Just because people were telling me it's fun. I never did it before so I thought I'd give it a try, see if I like it. It's different than I thought it would be, but it's fun, it's challenging."

"It's a great entertainment," said referee Tom Hlavacek. "These guys have a lot of heart and very good conditioning. In this day and age they just don't have the time to work on their skills. If they had the time they could be a great team. This is boxing at its best - amateur, and there's nothing disrespectful about calling it that. It comes from the Latin amare, to love, and that's why they do it. Here in front of the home crowd they're giving it all they can."

"I wouldn't call it quality, but more like quantity," said Aaron Griffin, who took in the fight night with some fellow cavalry soldiers. "It's more like a brawl than actual boxing, but it's good clean fun for the whole family." The hooting, hollering and humorous catcalls filling the arena seemed to indicate the family was indeed enjoying the night out.

"This is one of the largest events yet," said Joseph Jones, Büdingen sports director and the tournament organizer. "This is not going to go away. This is going to be a tradition from here on out."

Boxamania winners included Robert Santiago in the one light welterweight bout. Freddie Walker, Jim Laber, Tysaun Cook, James Sawyer and Villasenor took

home trophies among the middleweights. Chris Taul won the single light heavyweight fight of the tournament. Johnny Sado, Carlson and Vaughn Dalton were victors in the heavyweight division, and Alfie Roberts, Joshua Tritt and Froilan Torres won the laurels in super heavyweight competition.

Troop bragging rights went to the A Troop Apaches who out-pointed the Headquarters and Headquarters Troop pugilists 45-40 for the title.